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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000081

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [EAID](#) [WEBG](#) [QA](#) [GZ](#)
SUBJECT: QATAR-HOSTED GAZA CONFERENCE AVOIDS HEATED
RHETORIC, STICKS TO AID STRATEGY

REF: DOHA 71

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- Qatar Charity hosted a one-day workshop on aid to Gaza February 1 in Doha. The conference was organized by U.K.-based Humanitarian Forum and was intended to build partnerships among aid organizations so that they could harmonize their aid efforts in Gaza. Participants included a number of UN, Qatari, Arab, Muslim, and Western aid organizations.

-- The meeting was not intended to raise money and did not result in the announcement of any new pledges. The participants discussed ways to coordinate their aid programs, perhaps under U.N. auspices, and identified possible obstacles to their efforts. The principal obstacle in their view was access to Gaza, and participants noted that Israel had the obligation under international law to allow humanitarian aid to enter.

-- A final communique was not issued on February 1, but conference organizers planned to issue a statement late on February 2. (Contents of communique will be reported septel.)

(C) COMMENT

-- This conference moved beyond the heated rhetoric on Gaza of late and focused instead on the practical challenges facing relief organizations as they seek to provide relief to Gaza. It was largely devoid of political rhetoric, and participants advocated a joint and collaborative approach to Gaza aid, in contrast to the unilateral approach taken by Qatar at times in the past.

-- By including Western and international organizations in the conference, the organizers also adopted a broader approach than called for by Hamas leader Khalid Mish'al, who stated that Gaza aid should be coordinated by Arab or Islamic organizations (see reftel).

End Key Points and Comments.

1. (SBU) The one-day workshop on aid to Gaza was hosted by Qatar Charity but organized by the Humanitarian Forum, a UK-based organization. The workshop was intended to harmonize aid efforts among Arab, Muslim, and Western

humanitarian relief organizations. The Forum's steering group comprises a number of respected organizations (see: www.humanitarianforum.org). Humanitarian Forum founder and president Dr. Hany El-Banna told Econoff Fabrycky that the group has previously organized a number of similar regionally-focused coordination events.

12. (SBU) Econoff observed three breakout groups that were sharing reports on their groups' activities in Gaza and discussing concrete steps for harmonizing their efforts. During the general session, participants agreed on the need to coordinate their efforts on Gaza aid and identified potential challenges to their work, chief of which was gaining access to Gaza. Participants stressed the need to work under the auspices of a credible umbrella organization for gaining access to and distributing aid among the population.

13. (SBU) The consensus of the participants was that an international body, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), should take the lead in coordinating donations and the distribution of relief. It was acknowledged that such an organization would have the credibility to deal effectively with the governments and factions involved.

13. (SBU) The event was not/not intended as a fund-raising or pledging conference, according to Humanitarian Forum and Qatar Charity representatives. They are hoping, however, that some of the charities will establish new partnerships and/or announce joint projects. For example, the Qatar

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Foundation's Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) and Mercy Corps held private talks on the margins of the conference. Humanitarian Forum Director James Shaw-Hamilton told Econoff Fabrycky that just having Western and Islamic aid groups sitting at the table together discussing common approaches made the event successful.

14. (SBU) The only observed Qatari representatives in attendance were from Qatar Charity, the Qatar Red Crescent, and ROTA. Nobody attended from the Qatar Authority for Charitable Activities (QACA), Sheikh Eid Society, or other local charities. There were no GOQ reps, although UN representatives said they had met with Minister of State for International Cooperation Khalid Al-Attiyah to discuss development activities in general.

15. (SBU) Econoff obtained a hard copy list of what Qatari and some of the other attending charities are doing in Gaza. The spreadsheet details the implementing partners for the charities. (A copy of the spreadsheet has been provided to NEA/ARP.)

16. (SBU) Groups with participants at the conference included (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Humanitarian Forum
- Abdulaziz Arrukban, Special Humanitarian Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General
- UN Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- UNICEF
- UNRWA
- Oxfam
- Qatar Charity
- Qatar Red Crescent
- Reach Out to Asia (ROTA)
- Humanitarian Forum Kuwait
- Islamic Relief
- Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation
- ICRC
- Turkey's Foundation for Human Rights, Freedoms, and Humanitarian Relief
- Mercy Corps

-- World Vision
LeBaron